

Agnes Herbison

Aug 6, 2013 / OBITUARIES



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March 8, 1917 – August 6, 2013

Born in Winnipeg, Agnes spent most of her childhood in Stouffville, Ontario. As she lost her mother, stepmother and grandmother all by the age of ten, her father played a very important role in her life. He was a schoolteacher, a free thinker with a love of language and a passion for gardening – all attributes which he passed on to his daughter. Agnes showed promise as a pianist at an early age and her ability to play a song after hearing it once or twice on the radio ensured her popularity at social gatherings throughout her teenage years.

She graduated from the University of Toronto with a degree in Sociology, and in 1940 obtained a diploma in Social Work. At the same time she continued with advanced piano studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music, where she obtained her A.R.C.T.

Agnes married Hugh Herbison in 1940 and immediately they moved to B.C. where Hugh was first a church minister, then a logger and schoolteacher. Their years in isolated coastal communities were full of adventure along with hardship.

In 1942 Agnes gained employment as a Social Worker, with a caseload covering several coastal communities including Courtenay and Powell River. Although this job lasted little more than a year, it gave her enormous satisfaction to be working in the profession for which she was trained.

In 1951 they moved to Crescent Valley, then to Nelson in 1953. Agnes was active in the musical life of Nelson, teaching, accompanying and performing, and was a co-founder of the Nelson branch of Voice of Women (for Peace). The family made Argenta their permanent home in 1961.

Always keen for adventure, they spent two years (1966-68) on the island of Borneo (Malaysia) where both Hugh and Agnes taught at a secondary school. Upon returning to Canada, Agnes began commuting to Nelson to teach piano, and in 1971 she accepted the position of organist and choirmaster at St. Paul's Trinity United Church (now Nelson United), a position she held until 1985. She took a two-year sabbatical from the church to attend Vancouver Community College, where she obtained a Diploma in Music in 1977. Agnes considered this period of total devotion to music a real highlight of her life. At the age of 70 she retired from her musical activities in Nelson. She was always loved and admired by her many students and musical colleagues.

Back in Argenta and full of her typical enthusiasm, she mounted a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore in 1990. Much of the community was involved in the production, and in the following years she undertook productions of two more Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, all with great success. Agnes gave her last public concert in the Argenta Community Hall two years ago, just after her 94th birthday.

Family, community, gardening, politics and social justice were among the issues dear to her heart and informed her actions throughout her long life. She was made a lifetime member of the NDP in 2002; she was an active supporter and fundraiser for SOS Children's Villages; she kept abreast of world events

and donated generously to causes she believed in; and she wrote countless letters to politicians. Most of all, she believed in the power of love, a belief she demonstrated beautifully even during the last months of her life. Agnes was predeceased by her husband Hugh in 2009. She will be greatly missed by her five children, Kathie, Wendy, David, Brenda and Nancy, her nine grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and many in-laws.

A celebration of her life will be held at the Argenta Community Hall at 1 pm on Sunday, October 13, 2013. All are welcome.

Agnes' family wish to thank all the staff and volunteers at the Kaslo Victorian Health Centre for the truly exceptional care, respect and affection shown to her during the past seven months of her life.